

EDITOR'S MISCELLANY



[THE *New York Medical Journal* of December 1st discusses editorially "Women Nurses for Insane Men." We believe this is a subject upon which we all need more knowledge, and that the nursing profession should take greater interest in the subject of the training-schools in the hospitals for the insane. Adequate nursing care for this ever increasing class of patients presents a burning problem which cannot be ignored.—ED.]

WOMEN NURSES FOR INSANE MEN

It is easily understood that the nursing of the insane presents problems quite different from those encountered in maintaining an efficient system of nursing ordinary hospital patients. Except in cases of casual illness, the nurse in a lunatic asylum has little occasion to train herself or himself in the duties and attentions that make up the nurse's occupation in caring for the sick and injured who are of sound mind. Hence the service is not popularly supposed to qualify a person for the general career of a nurse. Moreover, the average individual instinctively shrinks from contact with lunatics, though it is a mistake to suppose that an insane person is necessarily repulsive or even unattractive.

At the sixty-second annual meeting of the American Medico-Psychological Association, held in Boston last June, there were presented several papers dealing with the various questions connected with the nursing of the insane, and there followed a general discussion of the subject. The papers and a report of the discussion are published in the October number of the *American Journal of Insanity*. In one of the papers Dr. Charles R. Bancroft, medical superintendent of the New Hampshire State Hospital, gives excellent reasons for a more extensive employment of women nurses in men's wards than is at present resorted to. Naturally, as he says, it is absolutely necessary that the male patients should be so classified as to make the assignment of women nurses to certain men's wards safe and unobjectionable. Such a classification, he thinks, can be more successfully carried out in a small hospital than in a large one, for the supervision of the patients can be closer and individual characteristics more clearly recognized.

It is held that the presence of a refined and dignified woman exerts upon many of the insane men a wholesome and restraining influence. Those among whom women can be employed to the greatest advantage,

Dr. Bancroft thinks, are the inmates of the hospital reception ward, those of the hospital ward for the physically infirm, and those of the wards for the convalescent and most intelligent insane. Among the "active and disturbed" insane, women nurses had better not be employed. In all instances, of course, there must also be male attendants to perform certain services and to protect the women in case of need, but the woman should be in charge of the ward and the men subordinate. The women should be most carefully selected, for their fitness is due more to their character than to their attainments. Dr. Bancroft recognizes that there are many institutions in which women nurses have for years had charge of men's wards, but he thinks that it would be well to extend the practice to all lunatic asylums.

THE MALE NURSE FOR THE INSANE

AMONG the papers read at the meeting mentioned was one on this subject, by Dr. George T. Tuttle, medical superintendent of the McLean Hospital, Waverly, Mass. It seems that in that institution women have long been extensively employed, but not in actual charge of men's wards, having assigned to them duties peculiarly appropriate for well bred women. There must still be male nurses, and it appears that there is increasing difficulty in obtaining men of the right stamp. Many of the men who apply for work as nurses, says Dr. Tuttle, have no intention of following the profession of nursing permanently; "they simply want a 'job,' have no real interest in the work, and look upon any systematic instruction as an accident of the service, to be tolerated but not desired." Some of them go from one institution to another in quest of "an easy place," and they may thus have learned methods which no good hospital would wish introduced into its service.

Dr. Tuttle gives the following list of reasons for the discharge of 765 men consecutively from nineteen hospitals for the insane: Intoxication, 197; abuse of patients, 132; away without permission, 66; insubordinate, 61; undesirable, 59; disobedient, 57; sleeping on duty, 47; theft, 28; untrustworthy, 27; unsatisfactory, 21; negligent, 19; untruthful, 15; unfaithful, 11; immoral, 11; entered service under false name, 8; aiding patients to escape, 4; drug habit, 2. Some of the reasons here given are expressed in rather vague terms, but it will be seen that the list is one of shortcomings mostly of a gross character in men undoubtedly chosen with great care. Therefore it must be conceded that it is very difficult to obtain unobjectionable male attendants for the insane.

Training-schools for asylum nurses do not seem to be as satisfactory in some respects as those for general hospital nurses. Dr. Edward B. Lane, formerly medical superintendent of the Boston Insane Hospital, contributed a paper on this subject. In the course of his paper he says: "There is a vast amount of necessary routine work that is done by the old fashioned attendant more satisfactorily than by the young pupil nurse who is, in accordance with training-school ideas, assigned in rapid rotation to various posts of duty." It looks as if the difficulty of obtaining proper male nurses for the insane would contribute powerfully to promote the more extensive employment of women.

NURSES' SCHOOLS AND ILLEGAL PRACTICE OF MEDICINE

The *Medical News* of December 1 gives the following:

Physicians have enough examples before them to emphasize the danger of putting the power to practise medicine into the hands of those who will use it wrongly. Some physicians, however, do not seem to learn this lesson. J. Noir criticises certain methods of instruction and certain manuals for nurses as having a tendency to encourage the production of illegal practitioners. He quotes passages from an English manual which support his contention, and reproduces the following resolutions which were adopted unanimously in the Congress for the Suppression of Illegal Practice: "1. Every attempt at initiative on the part of nurses, attendants, orderlies, etc., should be reprov'd by the physicians and by the hospital administration. 2. The programmes of nursing schools and the manuals employed should be limited strictly to the indispensable matters of instruction for those in their position, without going extensively into purely medical matters which might give them a false notion as to their duties and lead them to substitute themselves for the physician. 3. The professional instruction of orderlies and nurses should be intrusted exclusively to the physicians, who only can judge what is necessary for them to know. 4. The physicians charged with this instruction should never forget, in the course of their lectures, to insist on the possible dangers of the initiative on the part of orderly and nurse, and on the serious responsibility that would be incurred in case of accident by the persons thus inconsiderately stepping out from their proper sphere." These maxims should certainly be borne in mind by the physician who has dealings with the nurse, as a matter of simple justice to her that she be not encouraged to take steps that are not in her province.

[To what extent are nurses of really high grade training-schools in the habit of "substituting themselves for the physician"?—Ed.]